

**THE BIBLE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

One of the most important subjects before the Christian people of this country is the use of the Bible in the public schools. In most States the reading of the Bible is permitted. In some it is required. In a few it is forbidden.

An organization which is doing more to awaken interest in this matter than any other is the National Reform Bureau of Washington, D. C., of which Dr. W. F. Crafts is the head. Dr. Crafts has prepared a book of Bible readings and stories which he is urging the school authorities to introduce into the public schools. He has also recently sent out a leaflet containing, among other things, the Ten Commandments, and a "Lesson on Ten Commandments." This is said to be taken from "Easy Lesson on Christian Doctrine Prepared for Mixed Schools," by "Father (now Bishop) Regis Canevin; approved by Bishop R. Phelan, also by a union school board, which included Dr. Allison, editor of Presbyterian Banner." If this is to be a specimen of the teaching of the Bible which is to be done in the public schools we want to enter our protest as strongly as we know how.

In the first place, with the position which the Catholic Church as a church has always taken in regard to the public schools of this country, and their well known opposition of putting the Bible into the hands of the people, we do not understand why a priest of that Church should be called upon to prepare lessons for use in the public schools. We know very well that there are some Catholics and even some priests who do not approve entirely of the position of that Church in regard to these matters, but with all of the learning and scholarship of the Protestant Church, we see no necessity for going to the Catholic Church for such instruction, when the Protestants are so far in the majority in the patronage of public schools.

When we come to examine these lessons on the Commandments, we are just as much opposed to the way in which the teaching is presented as we are to the teacher.

The first question asked and answered is as follows: "Q. To obtain eternal salvation is it enough to know what God teaches? A. No; we must also keep His commandments."

As will be seen this question makes salvation the result of works and says nothing about faith.

Here is another question and answer: "Q. How are we to love our neighbor as ourselves? A. 'As you would,' says Christ, 'that men should do to you, do you also to them.'"

As will be seen the answer does not reply to the question. The question is in regard to love and our Saviour says we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. The answer deals only with what we have a right to expect in the action of others.

Take another question and answer: "Q. Who is our neighbor? A. All men are our neighbors; even those who injure us, or differ from us in religion."

This answer seems to teach that differing from one another in religion is a great sin. It says we are to love our neighbors even though they have injured us or differ from us in religion. This seems to put the two offenses on an equality, and both are to be looked upon as sins.

In an answer to another question as to who gave the Ten Commandments, it is said that they were given by God to Moses and that Christ confirmed them in the "New Law." Of course, this means the New Testament, but

probably very few Protestant children would know what the reference means.

Some of the answers given to the questions as to the meaning of the commandments do not seem to make matters any clearer than the commandment itself. Take this example: "What is forbidden by the words, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain'? A. These words forbid all profanation of the holy name of God."

We believe that the child would know the meaning of the commandment more probably than he would know the meaning of the explanation.

On the very important question in regard to the Fourth Commandment, we find that the answer merely repeats the question with very slight variation, and gives no answer as to its meaning. Here is the way in which the question and answer appear: "What are we commanded by the words, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'? A. We are commanded to keep holy the Sabbath Day."

Another question on this same commandment is as follows: "Q. How is the Lord's Day profaned? A. The Lord's Day is profaned by unnecessary worldly business, dissipation, drinking, dancing, and whatever else tends to make it a day of revelry and scandal, rather than of rest and prayer."

It will be seen that the violation of this commandment is limited to doing whatever turns the Sabbath into a day of revelry or scandal. This only could apply to the grossest form of outward violation and would have no reference to many forms of its desecration, and of which people all over the country are guilty every Sabbath, and which deprive it of its spiritual power.

These examples are sufficient to show how pernicious would be such teaching, and helps us very much to sympathize with those who are opposed to the use of the Bible in public schools because they fear the teaching which will accompany it. We believe that the Bible should be read in the school and that the reading of it will accomplish great good. When it comes to teaching it in any other way, the problem is one of the most difficult that has ever been presented to the Christian Church.

**THE IMPOTENCE OF ERROR.**

In the very last word of Paul to the cantankerous Church at Corinth, he utters one of his deepest truths and most comforting principles. In 2 Corinthians 13:8 he says: "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."

We may take the word "truth" in any of its common senses in Scripture and this will hold true. Perhaps Paul meant it in respect of the gospel. He was an Apostle and had the peculiar powers of an apostle, yet these marvelous gifts could be used only for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. The moment he began to use them for selfish and unholy purposes, like Samson in the lap of Delilah, his power departed from him. After all, life is a question of purpose. What was he doing with his gifts?

Rome has claimed a foolish infallibility irrespective of the character of the pope or his manifest selfishness. This cuts athwart the claim. Granted that the pope is the vicar of Christ on earth. If that vicar is tearing down the kingdom and beating the menservants and maidservants and is drunken, his infallibility will depart from him in an instant, for even an apostle could do nothing against the gospel. His powers must be subordinated to the holy purposes of the kingdom of God.

So all ecclesiastical power comes back to the

purpose of its use. Many a victory on the floor of Synod or Assembly, is perfectly barren, because ecclesiastical fiat fails in the consuming presence of unholy purposes. It equally follows that the attempts of the world to quench the truth will fail. The greatest combinations of world-forces have gone down in distrust and defeat before the simple truth. "Turn the light on the rascals" was all that Tilden needed to say and evil shrunk. Get the issue clear, and victory will follow. God fights not on the side of the heaviest battalions, but on the side of His kingdom, and for the carrying out of His purpose on earth. As Lincoln said the sole question for us to know is, not whether the Lord is on our side, but whether we are on the Lord's side, because we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth.

We are not to do what is right in our eyes, but what God wants us to do. What tremendous impetus is given to the careful study of His word and especially in the light of history and providence. There are false lights along the shore, but God's word is clear and steady. It will finally prevail.

Or, we may take this word "truth" in the sense of moral excellence.

Righteousness; the position of being right, of conformity to facts, is the final test of everything.

This is an age of statistics. With almost infinite labor figures are piled to prove everything, and then another pile is gotten to show an entirely different conclusion. It depends on what they want to prove. Recently a distinguished Presbyterian minister of New York City stated in a sermon published in the Christian Herald that not more than five per cent of America were Christians. By a rapid process of elimination the 20,000,000 of Protestant Christians were whittled down to some five millions that are really Christians at heart. On the other hand our genial secretary of Foreign Missions, who proposes to put the Virginia Synodical in the forefront of the Assembly in calling for a million dollars for Foreign Missions instead of \$666,000, asserts that "in the homeland there are two non-professors for one Protestant communicant"; while the statistics show only 20,000,000 in round numbers against a population of 102,000,000 in our country, a ratio of one communicant to five non-communicants. Such contradictory statements as these make us suspicious of statistics anyhow. No doubt not both are supremely honest in the statement, but the truth must lie somewhere outside.

Now the fact is that neither the purpose of arousing the Church at home to greater activity in the homeland, nor that of increasing the gifts to Foreign Missions will be accomplished in a permanent way such methods. The truth will stand that we ought to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature whether at home, or abroad. God is not concerned with human metes and bounds. We can do nothing against the gospel, but must do everything for the gospel wherever it may be preached.

The fact is the only thing worth having in this old world, or heaven either is the truth.

Whether it is the gospel; that truth concerned with the salvation of man from sin, or the matters of moral rectitude as between man and man, or the mere cold facts of science, the truth we must have, and the truth is mighty because it is the expression of God's nature and will prevail.

A. A. L.

"The darker our night, the more radiant His coming." God is nearer to me than I am to myself.—Eckert.